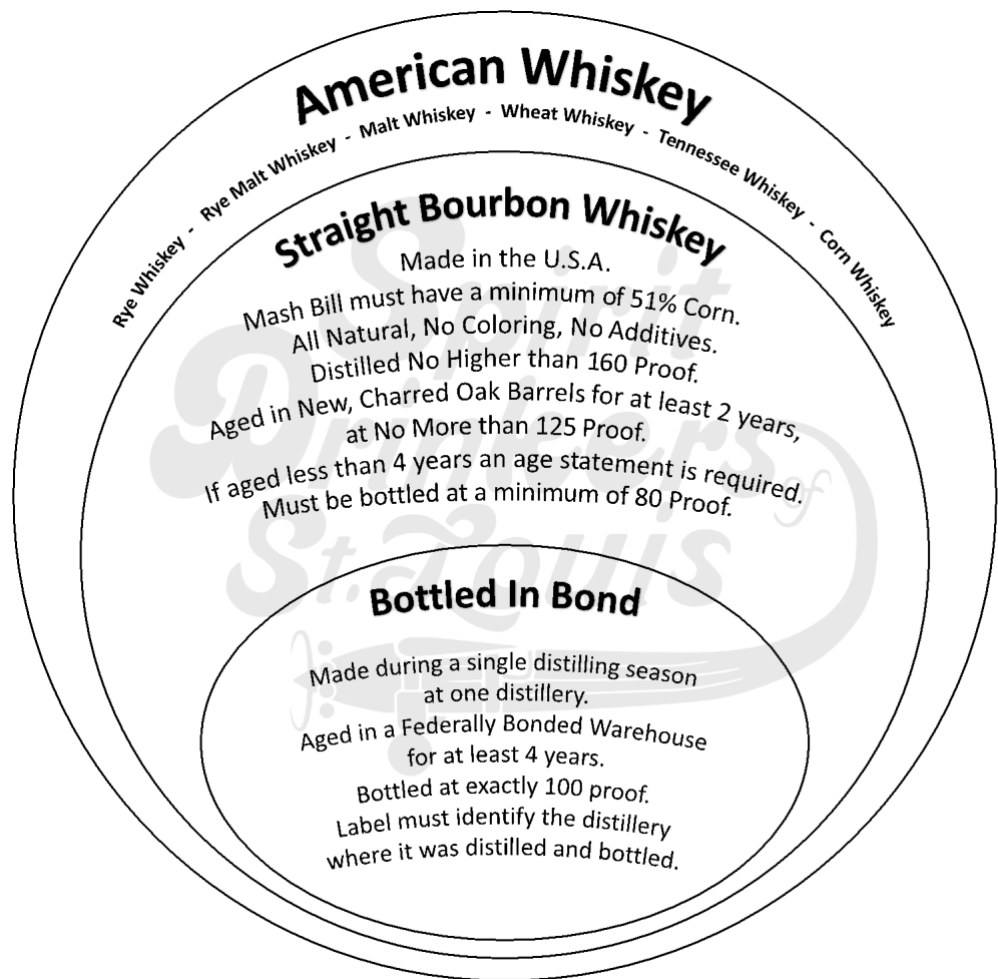
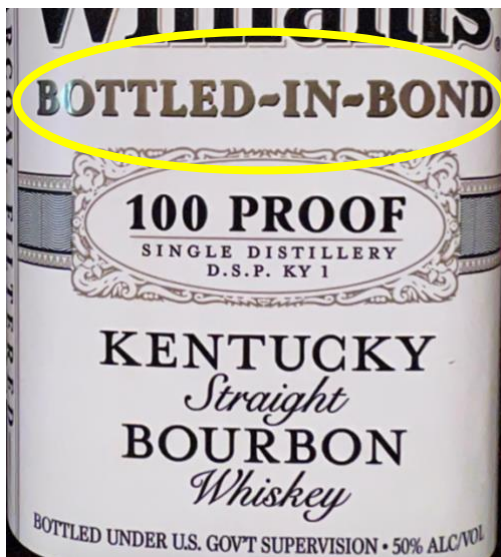
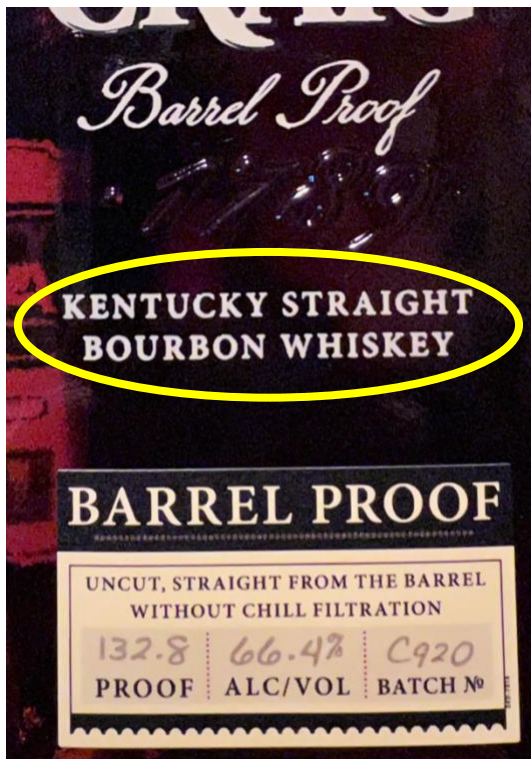


# Spirit Drinkers of St. Louis - Bourbon Notes

[www.spiritdrinkersofstlouis.com](http://www.spiritdrinkersofstlouis.com)

## ***Bourbon Rule #1***

*Do not let anyone tell you what bourbon you should like, how you should drink it, or what it is supposed to taste like to you.*



## **Bourbon gets **MOST** of its flavor and **ALL** its color from the charred oak barrel**

Charring or burning the wooden barrel breaks down **hemicellulose** into wood sugars. The sugars in turn give the bourbon flavors of brown sugar, molasses, caramel, and toffee. **Lignins** in the wood are released adding vanilla and spice to the juice. **Oak Lactones** are also released giving the bourbon a woody or coconut flavor. **Tannins** are present in the charred barrels as well but most of these disappear as the oak is aged before it is made into a barrel.

Charring also produces carbon (essentially charcoal) which helps filter out sulfur and other fusel oils in the ethyl alcohol.

## **Bourbon Buyer's Guide**

[www.spiritdrinkersofstlouis.com](http://www.spiritdrinkersofstlouis.com)

**Look for: *Straight Bourbon Whiskey (SBW)*** - must follow Federal Laws if this is on the label. At least 51% corn, no additives, coloring or flavoring, new charred oak barrels, distilled to no more than 160°, aged at least 2-yr at 125° or less, no age statement if more than 4-yr, bottled at 80° or more, made in the USA.

**Look for: *Bottled in Bond (BIB)*** - all of the Straight Bourbon Laws plus grains must come from the same season, distilled and aged at one location, must be at least 4-yr old and bottled at exactly 100°, aged in a Federally Bonded Warehouse.

*If it just says Bourbon or Whiskey, then all bets are off, you could be buying flavored vodka.*





# Bourbon Terminology

**Mash Bill:** The ingredient list, typically 51-75% corn, 20-30% malted barley, 10-20% rye. Wheated bourbons replace wheat for rye and are typically smoother than Rye bourbons. Four grain bourbons include corn, barley, rye, and wheat.

**Sour Mash:** The process of using already cooked grains (stillage) as a starter for the next batch of bourbon. This helps balance the enzymes need to enable the yeast to convert sugars to alcohol and to provide a more consistent bourbon from batch to batch.

**Distiller's Beer:** Fermented Mash that is ready to be distilled. Distiller's beer is typically 8 to 18 percent alcohol.

**White Dog (a.k.a. High Wine, New-Make):** Spirit that has been distilled but has not yet aged in a barrel.

**Char:** The amount of time a new barrel is burned expressed in levels, usually 1-4. Level 1 = 15 seconds, Level 2 = 30 seconds, Level 3 = 35 seconds, Level 4 = 55 seconds...Level 7 = 3 minutes and 30 seconds.

**Rickhouse (a.k.a. Rackhouse, Warehouse):** The place where barrels are stored for aging. Most are non-climate controlled, as much as 8 stories tall, dirt floor, windowed warehouses that hold upwards of 120,000 barrels. Temperature and humidity vary greatly from floor to floor. Temperature changes cause the wood to expand and contract allowing the bourbon to enter and exit the pores of the wood.

**Angel's Share:** The juice that evaporates over time. Approximately, one-half of a barrel (53 gallons when full) will evaporate and/or soak into the wood (the Devil's Share) in the first 10-12 years.

**Devil's Share:** The amount of juice that is lost from soaking into the wood as the bourbon ages.



## THE PROCESS

1. Crush and grind the grains
2. Cook the grains into mash
3. Add yeast (and sour mash) to ferment the mash into distiller's beer
4. Distill the "beer" into white dog
5. Barrel the white dog
6. Age the white dog until it becomes bourbon



Picture courtesy of Independent Stave

## Other Bourbon Variants and Terms

**Finished Bourbons:** Straight Bourbon Whiskeys that are moved from one barrel to another **after** they have finished aging. *Very controversial, is it still bourbon?*

**Non-Chill Filtered:** Chill filtering removes barrel sediments and "bourbon haze" but also can remove some flavor.

**Blended Bourbons:** Blends of Straight Bourbon Whiskeys must be noted on the label. If it isn't then no telling what you're drinking.

**Small Batch:** Purely a marketing term. Varies by distillery.

**Single Barrel:** Approx. 100-200 bottles per barrel. Flavor will vary from barrel to barrel but not from bottle to bottle. *Beware, also a marketing term.*

**Barrel Proof:** Will not be "proofed down" (water added) when bottled.

**Sour Mash:** Process of adding mash that has already been mfg. to a new batch to balance fermentation and improve consistency.

**All Bourbon is Whiskey but not all Whiskey is Bourbon.**

